

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 0294

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: SHUM PFOR AR
SUBJECT: REACTION TO RELEASE ON HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

REF: BUENOS AIRES 0025

1. THERE HAS BEEN NO RPT NO EDITORIAL COMMENT IN LOCAL PRESS, WITH ONE MINOR EXCEPTION, ON HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT PRESENTED TO CONGRESS BY DEPT AND PUBLISHED JAN 2. THE GOA HAS MADE NO OFFICIAL STATEMENT ABOUT THE REPORT, AND HAS NOT RASIED SUBJECT WITH EMBASSY. INDIVIDUAL ARGENTINES IN GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE LIFE HAVE FOR THE MOST PART SHOWN LITTLE INTEREST.

2. EMBOFF VISITING FONMIN NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS OFFICE ON JAN 5 ON ROUTINE MATTERS FOUND THAT OFFICERS THERE DID NOT EVEN HINT AT SUBJECT OF REPORT.

3. AFTER INITIAL WIRE SERVICE REPORTS (REFTEL), PRESS DROPPED SUBJECTS ENTIRELY. ONLY ONE WEEKLY MAGAZINE, "SOMOS," A NOTABLY PRO-GOA PERIODICAL, IN ITS JAN 7 EDITION REFERRED BRIEFLY TO HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT. IT FORESAW A "HOT SUMMER" FOR ARGENTINE-US RELATIONS WITH ADVENT OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION. "SOMOS" SAID THAT STATE DEPT REPORT TO CONGRESS HAD CAUSED "SERIOUS DISQUIET" IN TOP GOA CIRCLES, SO MUCH SO THAT A HIGH ARMED SERVICES OFFICER HAD BEEN ASSIGNED THE MISSION OF "CLARIFYING" THE INACCURATE INFORMATION
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REACHING WASHINGTON ABOUT WHAT IS OCCURRING IN ARGENTINA, AND ALERTING FUTURE AMERICAN OFFICIALS TO THE INJUSTICE OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE CAMPAIGN LOOSED AGAINST OUR COUNTRY." (WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION OF THIS STORY).

4. DISCREET EFFORTS TO LEARN WHETHER OR NOT GOA INFLUENCED EDITORS TO AVOID SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT BROUGHT GENERALLY

NEGATIVE REACTION. CHECK WITH LEADING NEWSPAPER "LA NACION"
BROUGHT RESPONSE THAT GOA HAD NOT RPT NOT ISSUED ANY GUIDANCE ON
SUBJECT; EDITORS LET IT ALONE IN FORM OF SELF-CENSORSHIP.
JACOBO TIMMERMAN, THE OWNER/EDITOR OF THE LIBERAL AND OUTSPOKEN
"LA OPINION", TOLD US THAT NO GUIDANCE HAD BEEN RECEIVED BUT THAT
SELF-CENSORSHIP HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN CALLED FOR. A WIRE-SERVICE
SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE KNEW OF NO FORMAL GUIDANCE FROM GOA
ON SUBJECT, BUT THAT EDITORS KNEW WHAT ATTITUDE SHOULD BE
ADOPTED.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE PUZZLED OVER ABSENCE OF GOA, PRESS OR
PRIVATE REACTION TO REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA. EVEN
THE MOST PRO-GOA PAPERS, WHICH MIGHT HAVE EDITORIALIZED
THAT RELATIVE MODERATION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION AGAINST
SANCTIONS ARE EVIDENCE THAT ARGENTINA'S BAD IMAGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
IS UNDESERVED, HAVE SAID NOTHING. GOA CRITICS WHO MIGHT BE EXPECTED
TO WELCOME THE REPORT HAVE SAID VIRTUALLY NOTHING. IN EXPLANATION,
WE FIRST CITE THE TIMING OF THE REPORT. IT WAS RELEASED AT THE
BEGINNING OF ARGENTINA'S SUMMER HOLIDAYS, WHEN THE CAPITAL IS ALL
BUT CLOSED DOWN. BOTH GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA DECISION-MAKERS WERE
OUT OF THE CITY OR INTENT ON VACATION PLANS. THE GOA HAD EVIDENTLY
DETERMINED IT WOULD NOT REACT TO THE REPORT IF IT COULD BE AVOIDED.
THE MEDIA WERE ADMITTEDLY EXERCISING SELF-CENSORSHIP. THE LACK OF
PRIVATE REACTION CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO LACK OF PRESS AND GOA
EMPHASIS ON THE REPORT IN ADDITION TO PREOCCUPATION WITH VACATION.
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